

1. A method for signing an electronic document, the method comprising:  
establishing an electronic signature appearance for an electronic signature;  
determining a bounding region on the electronic document for the display of the  
electronic signature appearance;  
5 at the time of signing an electronic document, previewing the electronic signature  
appearance in the bounding region; and  
signing the electronic document with an electronic signature, the electronic signature  
associated with the electronic signature appearance.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
10 configuring the electronic signature appearance at the time of signing the electronic  
document.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein configuring the electronic signature appearance  
comprises interacting with a user signing the electronic document.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein configuring the electronic signature appearance  
15 comprises:  
receiving user input activating controls for controlling textual and graphic elements  
included in the electronic signature appearance.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the controls comprise one or more of checkboxes and  
buttons.
- 20 6. The method of claim 4, wherein previewing the electronic signature appearance includes  
previewing a display in a configuration dialog box of the electronic signature appearance  
within the bounding region and the controls for controlling textual and graphic elements.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein previewing the electronic signature appearance includes  
displaying the electronic signature appearance within the bounding region on a display of the  
25 electronic document.
8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
including in the electronic signature appearance textual elements automatically copied  
from a certificate of a user signing the electronic document.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein:

establishing an electronic signature appearance comprises receiving user input selecting an electronic signature appearance from one or more existing electronic signature appearances.

5 10. The method of claim 1, wherein:

establishing an electronic signature appearance comprises interacting with a user to create an electronic signature appearance.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein:

10 establishing an electronic signature appearance comprises receiving an electronic signature appearance pre-configured by an author of the electronic document to be signed.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein determining a bounding region on the electronic document for the electronic signature appearance comprises interacting with a user signing the electronic document to establish the bounding region.

13. The method of claim 1, previewing the electronic signature appearance comprises  
15 previewing the electronic signature appearance configured to fit within the bounding region.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein determining the bounding region on the electronic document for the electronic signature appearance comprises establishing a bounding region pre-set by an author of the electronic document.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

20 determining an optimal layout of the electronic signature appearance based on the dimensions of the bounding region.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

determining optimal dimensions of the bounding region based on the electronic signature appearance.

17. A computer program product, tangibly stored on a machine-readable medium, comprising instructions operable to cause a programmable processor to:

establish an electronic signature appearance for an electronic signature;

determine a bounding region on the electronic document for the display of the electronic

signature appearance;

at the time a user is signing an electronic document, display a preview of the electronic signature appearance in the bounding region; and

interact with a user to sign the electronic document with an electronic signature, the electronic signature associated with the electronic signature appearance.

18. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:

configure the electronic signature appearance at the time of signing the electronic document.

19. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein the instructions operable to configure the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to interact with the user signing the electronic document.

20. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein instructions operable to configure the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to:

receive user input activating controls for controlling textual and graphic elements included in the electronic signature appearance.

21. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the controls comprise one or more checkboxes and buttons.

22. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein instructions operable to display a preview of the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to display in a configuration dialog box the electronic signature appearance within the bounding region and the controls for controlling textual and graphic elements.

23. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to display a preview of the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to display the electronic signature appearance within the bounding region on a display of the electronic document.

24. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:  
include in the electronic signature appearance textual elements automatically copied from  
a certificate of a user signing the electronic document.

25. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to establish an  
electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to receive user input selecting  
an electronic signature appearance from one or more existing electronic signature  
appearances.

26. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to establish an  
electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to interact with a user to  
create an electronic signature appearance.

27. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to establish an  
electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to receive an electronic  
signature appearance pre-configured by an author of the electronic document to be signed.

28. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to determine a  
bounding region on the electronic document comprise instructions operable to interact with a  
user signing the electronic document to establish the bounding region.

29. The computer program of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to display a preview of  
the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to display a preview of the  
electronic signature appearance configured to fit within the bounding region.

30. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to determine a  
bounding region on the electronic document for the electronic signature appearance comprise  
instruction operable to establish a bounding region pre-set by an author of the electronic  
document.

31. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:  
determine an optimal layout of the electronic signature appearance based on the  
dimensions of the bounding region.

32. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:  
determine optimal dimensions of the bounding region based on the electronic signature  
appearance.